suburban scene

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Carbondale Area Journal

Sometimes I believe the main concern of most bureaucrats, from small town to Washington, is merely to make life miserable for everybody else. How's this for an exercise in frustration and futility?

The 17 homes along the final block of Park Street, which runs along the side of Russell Park, have a bad problem with rats. And I mean rats, about the size of your normal house cat. There is no city sewer line along this section of road and each house has its own septic tank.

Things were bad enough when these rats kept to their own nests near a drainage ditch, but within the past week they've begun to invade a nearby home.

Mrs. Mae Dennis tells me that her dog, tied to a 20-foot chain in the back yard, has killed four of them. Bad enough, but when she found one in the ground floor bathroom of her home, and a day later her small grandson came running into the house frightened by a large rat in the back yard, she tried to do something about it.

Naturally, everyone's first course of action would be to call their local government. She did, and was told to call Vector Control in Scranton. She did, and was told to call her local government. The second call to City Hall brought street department foreman Walter Turonis up to her house.

Turonis told her the only thing they could do was to call Vector Control. When asked by Mrs. Dennis why the residents along that block couldn't be attached to the city's sewer line, she was told, "it'd be too expensive."

Vector Control arrived the next day and placed poison under the porch and around the property and drainage ditch. It didn't do any good.

Mrs. Dennis then called the Department of Environmental Resources (DER). They went up to the house and, according to Mrs. Dennis, took a look around and then told her they couldn't do anything about it. You know DER. That's the same so-called watchdog of our environment who tells us we can't do any burning behind our homes, then goes ahead and gives the City permission to burn trash over in the West Side, on the same site of the original mine fire, without the slightest regard for the residents living in that area.

After DER Mrs. Dennis called the State Board of Health. I really liked their response: "If anyone gets bitten, call us right away." A lot of good that's going to do.

Mrs. Dennis kept trying. She called Congressman McDade's office, who used their collective heads and came up with the brainstorm of notifying the county's Vector Control. I don't know what they expected the Vector Control Office to do, since all they can do is spread poison, which hasn't helped.

Next on the list of calls was to Mike Igoe at Channel 16. Mrs. Dennis hasn't heard a word since she made the call. She then called the Carbondale News who sent up reporter Barbara Wrobleski who also took a photo and ran the story in the local paper.